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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000132

SIPDIS

C O R R C T E D C O P Y (TEXT IN PARA 1 AND PARA 4)

SIDIS

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TAGS: [KNNP](#) [GOV](#) [PREL](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: IRAN: CODEL DUNCAN WEIGHS IN

REF: RABAT 115

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Classified By: DCM Wayne J. Bush for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On January 25, Codel Duncan, visiting Morocco January 24-26, stressed to Deputy FM Fassi Fihri US concerns with Iran's development of a nuclear program and encouraged Morocco to put its weight behind US and European efforts to reign in the Iranians within the framework of the UNSC. Fassi Fihri said that during his January 20 visit to Morocco, Iranian Envoy Ahmad Musavi tried to convince Morocco that Iran had the right to develop nuclear capacity and that the Muslim world needs a strong man as a deterrent to Western "aggression." Morocco told Musavi that Iran must comply with international law and non-proliferation conventions. Fassi Fihri cited potential harm to Morocco's interests that Iran's actions could cause. He said that Morocco is pleased with US efforts to deal with the issue multilaterally and emphasized that another war must be avoided at all costs. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Following a Country Team briefing at the Ambassador's residence on January 25, Congressman Jeff Miller (R-FL), member of the Armed Services Committee and a member of Codel Duncan that is visiting Morocco January 24-26 (septel), conveyed to Deputy Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri US concerns about Iran's development of nuclear capability. Congressman Miller stressed the importance to the US Congress and the American people that Morocco support US and European efforts to reign in the Iranians within the framework of the UNSC.

Understanding Iranian Motivations

¶3. (C) Fassi Fihri said that Morocco is deeply concerned about the evolution of the problem and is trying to understand the nature of Iran's calculations. Ticking off a list of plausible motivations for Iran's behavior, Fassi Fihri said Morocco wondered whether: 1) it is a purely domestic issue championed by new, populist Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad; 2) Tehran is using the issue to express its belief that Iran should be involved in resolving the situation in Iraq; or 3) Iran seeks to leverage the issue in a push to maximize solidarity with southern hemisphere countries. He noted that Iran may also be seizing on the backdrop of Palestinian elections on January 25 and the international focus on Syria as a pretext for advancing its nuclear program.

Iranian Envoy: "We Have the Right"

14. (C) Fassi Fihri said that Iranian Vice President in Charge of Parliamentary Affairs and Special Envoy, Ahmad Musavi, visited Morocco January 20 (reftel). King Mohammed VI did not/not receive him, but Prime Minister Driss Jettou did. Musavi tried to convince Morocco that Iran has the right to develop nuclear capacity because "others did before us," according to Fassi Fihri. Musavi argued that the Muslim world needs the capacity to show strength in order to deter "aggressive" actions by the West. (Comment: According to the official GOM press release following the visit, Musavi expressed to PM Jettou Iran's attachment to international conventions on the use of nuclear energy and its willingness to pursue negotiations in this area.)

15. (C) According to Fassi Fihri, Morocco conveyed to Iran the importance of complying with international law and conventions. Iran had no right to "spoil" the future of Morocco, which with rising oil prices, Fassi Fihri said, will not be able to survive economically without diversifying its dependence on imported oil. Noting that Morocco would become a member of the IAEA's council of governors in July, Fassi Fihri indicated that Morocco's goal was to cooperate with the IAEA, implement the relevant treaties, and sign the appropriate international protocols so that it might proceed with development of a nuclear research reactor for the purposes of supplying domestic power. (Comment: Implicit in Fassi Fihri's remarks was concern that an international embargo on Iran's oil would hurt Morocco by driving oil prices up and that Iran's aggressive approach could harm Morocco's ability to develop a peaceful nuclear energy program in the future.)

US Position Satisfactory

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16. (C) Morocco is gratified by indications that the US favors a multilateral approach to dealing with the Iran issue, commented Fassi Fihri. Morocco was hopeful that the IAEA and the UNSC could find a solution, whether it takes the form of an embargo, political pressure, or some other peaceful resolution. Another war, however, must be avoided at all costs, Fassi Fihri believed; armed conflict would be a "catastrophe" for the entire region. Further deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, continued Fassi Fihri, would have direct repercussions on the stability in countries all over the world.

Iran Too Belligerent on Israel

17. (C) Referencing Iranian President Ahmadinejad recent anti-Israel comments, including his desire to see the Israelis "pushed into the Mediterranean Sea," Fassi Fihri said that Morocco cannot accept that a foreign leader make such belligerent statements about Israel. Morocco, he confided, remains deeply interested in the 600,000 Jewish Moroccans who left their birthland to reside in Israel.

18. (U) Codel Duncan did not have an opportunity to clear this message.

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